



Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare
Partners: Amtrak, Caltrans Division of Rail, BNSF Railway Company, Union Pacific Railroad

REPRESENTING COUNTIES ALONG THE SAN JOAQUIN RAIL CORRIDOR

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, July 29, 2010

10:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Castle Conference Center

Atwater, CA 95301

Item 1 - Call to Order and Announcements (10:45 to 11:00 a.m.)

Amtrak arranged to have a special flag stop at the Castle Conference Center in Atwater, CA for the *San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee* attendees who were traveling both from north and south bound directions.

Supervisor and Chair John Pedrozo called this meeting at 10:45 a.m. Chair Pedrozo made a special announcement to remember long time *San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee* Member, George Gaekle. Chair Pedrozo, requested a moment of silence in honor of George Gaekle. After the moment of silence, Chair Pedrozo presented a plaque and a certificate to Stanislaus County Supervisor and Vice-Chair Vito Chiesa. The plaque was passed around to the members and will soon be mounted at the Modesto train station in Mr. Gaekle's honor.

Item 2 - Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items Only (11:00 to 11:15 a.m.)

Please complete a speaker request card.

Bill Kerby, Sacramento County and Rail Passenger Association of California (RailPAC) requested to discuss the closure of the "Bakersfield Gap." To connect the passenger rail line between the Bakersfield and Los Angeles Stations. He mentioned that it was George Gaekle's desire to one day see this gap closure and connect passenger rail service from Bakersfield to Los Angeles. Chairman John Pedrozo requested that this topic be placed on the agenda for future SJVRC meetings.

Greig Pirie, President of the Station Host Association of California and Amtrak Volunteer Station Host discussed the need for more volunteer hosts for the Stockton, Modesto, Merced, Fresno, Hanford and Bakersfield stations. Mr. Pirie left applications for people to pass on to anyone who may be interested. Mr. Pirie can also be contacted by email at gpirie2001@yahoo.com or by phone at (925) 457-9018.

Fresno County Committee Member Larry Miller addressed the comments from Bill Kerby about the Bakersfield Gap. Mr. Miller encouraged Mr. Kerby to stay with this focus.

Mr. Miller also stated that it is not within the abilities of the *San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee* (SJVRC) to give the authority for the connectivity of the Bakersfield Gap. Mr. Miller stated that Caltrans Division of Rail would have this ability. Contra Costa County Member Howard Abelson clarified that the Caltrans Division of Rail does not have the funds nor the rights over the rail lines. This authority would have to come from the railroad owners, which would be Union Pacific (UP).

Merced County Committee Member, Angelo Lamas stated that this connectivity is very important to the SJVRC.

Sacramento County Member Ed Coviello suggested working with the various Council of Governments (COG's) in the area between Bakersfield and Los Angeles.

After further discussion among the committee Members, the Members voted to write a letter to Caltrans Division of Rail Division Chief, Bill Bronte and the California High Speed Rail Chief, Curt Pringle. Merced County Member Angelo Lamas motioned Madera County Supervisor Vern Moss seconded it.

Item 3 - Action Items (11:15 to 11:20 a.m.)

A. Minutes of the April 29, 2010 Quarterly minutes in Fresno.

PASSED: Merced County Member and Chair John Pedrozo made a motion and Members unanimously approved this action item.

B. Discuss and revisit the San Joaquin Valley Rail Committee's New Logo-

Lee Goldenberg, Caltrans Division of Rail Operations Branch Chief, presented the new logo, which was voted on at the April 29, 2010 meeting, along with an example of the letterhead. He asked the committee to review both of the documents for their final approval. Alameda County Member Tom Blalock motioned it and Madera County Supervisor Vern Moss seconded it. The new SJVRC logo has been finalized and will begin to be utilized in all of future SJVRC documents.

Item 4 - Committee Member Information Items (11:20 to 11:30 a.m.)

Merced County Member Angelo Lamas brought up the roster and mailing labels SJVRC Coordinator Denise Gibson has been updating. Mr. Lamas asked the committee Members to look at the lists and update any changes that may be needed. Ms. Gibson will update these lists with the information she received today. Ms. Gibson thanked the committee for their help in this process.

Item 5 - Report (11:30 to 11:50 a.m.)

Amtrak California Marketing

Debbie Mullins, Caltrans Division of Rail Marketing Branch Chief, and Lisa Martin, Caltrans Marketing Associate introduced Brian Hart who is the new Amtrak Field Marketing Director.

Ms. Mullins presented the “Train Wrap” logo that will be displayed during Rail Safety Month in September. This large yellow logo that displays a fist with the words, “STAY OFF THE TRACKS - I PACK A PUNCH!”, will be placed on the trains, in both English and Spanish, during the month of September. Ms. Mullins stated that the *San Joaquin* corridor will be the focus this year for Rail Safety Month. The press conference and event will take place on September 14, 2010 in Sacramento, CA. The meeting place will either be at the Sacramento Train Station or at the Rail Museum. This event will be a partnership between Amtrak, Capital Corridor Joint Powers Authority, Operation LifeSaver, and the Union Pacific Railroad to raise rail safety awareness in the public.

Ms. Mullins also presented the new Amtrak California logo. The old Amtrak logo, with the four arrows, is now obsolete.

Lisa Martin discussed and displayed the new Amtrak California website at <http://www.amtrakcalifornia.com/>. Ms. Martin demonstrated how to navigate throughout the site and how to get information you need and how easy it is to obtain train tickets from this site. The schedules are on line and usable and not PDF, which the old site utilized. Ms. Martin pointed out that the new website has a link to the bus thruway schedule of each train station, as well as public transportation information links. Ms. Martin emphasized that this new site is all about ease and availability for passenger use. In addition, the site has links regarding local information and specific chamber of commerce offices within the train station and area of interest to the user/rider. There is also a link to contact the marketing group for any questions and concerns a user may have regarding the website or station.

LUNCH (11:50 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.)
(BBQ provided by Supervisor Pedrozo)

Item 5 – Reports - Continued (12:30 to 1:45 p.m.)

A. Amtrak California Safety/Security/Train Operations

Mike Edwards, Amtrak Trainmaster, began with a brief history of the *San Joaquin* Amtrak passenger train which pulled into the Fresno Station on March 6, 1974. Mr. Edwards continued this discussion with the on-time performance statistics for April, May and June. He stated that Amtrak’s overall performance is 90% and the *San Joaquin* corridor overall on-time performance continues to be over 90%, which is excellent. He continued and explained that the morning times are good for on-time performance because there is no Maintenance of Work (MOW) and it is an “open road” at that time, whereas the afternoon has more traffic, activity and maintenance and construction track work. Mr. Edwards stated that a lot of the MOW work begins in the spring months due to weather.

Fresno County Member Larry Miller interjected by pointing out that Amtrak overall on-time performance out performs the airline companies (80%).

Greg Santos, Amtrak Trainmaster, discussed the construction of the Madera station. He explained that there may be time delays when they are working on the tracks during this construction. He also stated that the town of Merced has a major project on G Street, right next to the train station. The town is connecting G Street, which means a tunnel will be built to extend underneath the railroad tracks. Mr. Santos stated that this will inevitably lead to time delays, but he is very optimistic that these will be minimal.

Mr. Edwards and Mr. Santos continued to discuss various situations that impede train safety/security and operations. They stated that certain trains, such as Train 717 which had a time conflict with the Capital Corridor train, had created time delays. Debris and trespasser strikes still continue to be the main cause of many delays. Each one of these delays can vary in time delays from 8 minutes to two hours. Most of the delays vary between 15-20 minutes. Trespasser strikes vary in delays from 4-206 minutes in April and 46-135 minutes in May. The delays are inconsistent because each one has so many elements involved. At times, a train may strike something left on the tracks and the damage is unknown due to the location on the train, such as underneath or between the cars where the sensitive brake and pressure lines are. The train must stop for repair a few miles from the strike location. Mr. Santos pointed out that police action, which varies from the removal of unruly passengers, to conducting searches, to police boarding the train for other various reasons, may trigger time delays at the stations. These are incidents which extend beyond the abilities and training of the engineers and can only be dealt with by police.

Mr. Edwards pointed out that city and county law enforcement is jurisdictional, which reflect on time delays since Amtrak is waiting for the proper law enforcement agency to handle the situation. Sacramento County Member Mr. Coviello asked Mr. Andrews if these trespasser or debris strikes are worse in the *San Joaquin* corridor than any other areas of the US. Mr. Andrews stated it was not any worse.

Mr. Santos stated that there are more semi-truck strikes than small vehicle strikes. Mr. Andrews stated that the trespasser strike data only states that it was a pedestrian strike not the intention, such as a suicide or an accident. Mr. Santos talked about the near miss data. A "plugged train" means that the engineer had to slam on the brakes of the train in order to miss something on the tracks. Mr. Santos and Mr. Edwards showed various train accident photos, such as the July 9, 2010 train (*San Joaquin 717*) after a boom truck and the train collided. Mr. Edwards and Mr. Santos wanted to stress the domino effect that occurs when equipment is struck and damaged in preventable situations.

Mr. Santos ended the discussion by making the committee aware of the "Viper Team." The Viper Team is a group of officers who in partnership with local county sheriff's departments and/or city police departments with Amtrak, catch individuals in vehicles who are crossing over the tracks after the crossing arms have lowered. Mr. Santos stated that there is a Viper Team "operation" all day today, and one of the staging areas is located where the flag stop was for this meeting.

B. Union Pacific (UP) Railroad Company

Andy Perez, UP Marketing – South, is filling in for the UP Northern California Marketing position until this position is filled. His jurisdiction is now both the entire Northern and Southern California region. He has graciously accepted the invitation to attend this meeting to discuss marketing strategies from Union Pacific Railroad.

Mr. Perez began by discussing an on-going problem where homeless individuals set up camp on the UP right of way land next to the tracks. He is currently working on finding ways to relocate the homeless to avoid trespasser strikes at these camp site locations. Union Pacific is working with various cities to subsidize a program for the city to relocate the homeless population away from the track. He will be presenting a \$5,000 check to Galt for this purpose.

Mr. Perez stated that safety is very important to UP. On September 20, 2010 UP will be setting up a “Safety Train” in Fresno and will present safety issues for the residents in the area. This is an area where there have been numerous debris strikes.

Los Angeles County Member Mr. Fung mentioned that different ethnicities and the marketing information should be in different languages. Mr. Perez reassured that the UP safety brochures and information will be in several different languages in order to get the information out to everyone.

C. *San Joaquin* Passenger Services

Anthony Chapa, Amtrak Superintendent of Passenger Services, began by stating that the *San Joaquin* had 91% Customer Service Index (CSI) Customer satisfaction overall. He continued to discuss that there are new food items added, while some were discontinued. He also mentioned that the in motion cleaning services will continue, but at this time there is a reduction of personnel. He is in the process of getting two additional positions filled and hopes to have this process completed by the end of August. He will be holding interviews on August 12, 2010 for this specification.

Mr. Chapa stated that in June 2010, the *San Joaquin* had a ridership of 88,000 passengers. He pointed out that compared to the previous year, June was the only month in which the ridership was less. All of the other months were above.

Mr. Goldenberg stated that the *San Joaquin* currently has five-car train sets through the Labor Day holiday. He stated we hope to break the all-time one-million ridership record this year.

D. Amtrak Government Affairs/Federal Updates

Pat Merrill, Amtrak Assistant Vice President-Policy and Development, West, stated that his first order of business is to replace railcars that are 50-60 years old. He also discussed strategies to improve safety and technology of the trains. He talked about the Section 209 grant that if a corridor is less than 750 miles the states must contribute to help fund these corridors. He stated that since it has been mandated that States must financially contribute, this will help fund the Amtrak passenger rail line.

E. California Department of Transportation/State Updates

Bruce Roberts, Caltrans Division of Rail, was speaking on behalf of Mr. Bill Bronte, Caltrans Division of Rail Division Chief, who was out of town. Mr. Roberts told the committee that Caltrans Division of Rail is in the process of submitting five grant applications to the Federal Rail Administration. These grants are due August 6, 2010. He stated that one of the grant applications is for rolling stock equipment, another for the Stockton-Escalon double track and several for rail crossing upgrades.

Item 6 - Guest Speakers (1:45 to 3:30 p.m.)

A. East Coast High Speed Rail System

Tom Cornillie, Amtrak Principal Officer of Infrastructure Planning, Policy and Development-West, discussed the history of the East Coast High Speed Rail System and the infrastructure needs along the Northeast Corridor. He discussed the challenges in Northeast corridor is that it is shared by other rail commuter passenger service lines. He stated that some corridors are busier than others and traffic is not consistent. He brought up the point that Amtrak shares the track with the multiple commuter service and they are operating on a very tight commuter railroad timeline and they are still able to move the high speed rail lines through it.

Mr. Cornillie reiterated that investments in passenger rail lines help to bring immediate benefits to problems where equipment is aging and many projects need to be completed, such as maintenance over bridges that are decaying. He stated that in order for High Speed Rail to work efficiently, the track structure needs to be built up to accommodate the speed of the train.

Mr. Cornillie stated that the East Coast Speed rail service, Acela has 32 frequency stops and eight car train sets. He said the *San Joaquin* corridor is very similar with the Northeast corridor. The market demonstrates that there is need for an increase in services and more equipment.

B. Amtrak Maintenance

Iosif Ivan, Mechanical superintendent for Oakland Maintenance Facility, discussed the issues at Amtrak's Oakland Maintenance Facility where the *Capital Corridor* and *San Joaquin* trains are serviced and maintained.

Mr. Ivan stated that he maintains 84 rail cars for the Amtrak California Northern fleet as well as the California Zephyr.

He supervises a staff of 156 individuals. The maintenance station is on 27 acres which includes Caltrans right of way. The Oakland Maintenance Station is open for business 24 hours a day/ seven days a week. The maintenance station opened in 2004. Mr. Ivan stressed that safety was a high priority at the maintenance station. In the year 2008 there were eight injuries reported and in 2009 there were six injuries. By July 29, 2010 there have been three injuries. He enforces the "Safe to Safer" approach to the work.

C. Amtrak Thruway Bus Operations

Barbara Ruditis, Amtrak Bus Operations-South, provided a bus tour and ride around the Castle Air Force Base during her presentation. Many of the committee Members were on the bus during this presentation. Due to the limited amount of seating, there were a few individuals who were not able to join. Ms. Ruditis was asked to discuss Amtrak driver training and safety in the wake of the Greyhound bus accident that occurred the previous week on Highway 99 in Fresno County.

The handouts presented in this presentation are attached to these minutes.

Will Schilling, Caltrans Division of Rail Bus Operations Associate, presented the bus route changes which are scheduled to take effect in November 2010.

D. Remarks by the Chair

Supervisor John Pedrozo

Item 7 - Member Comments, Suggestions for Future Agenda Items (3:30 to 3:45 p.m.)

A. Announcements

Fresno County Member Larry Miller made an announcement that in two weeks he will be resigning from the *San Joaquin* Valley Rail Committee. Mr. Miller stated that this will be his last meeting.

Caltrans Division of Rail Operations Branch Chief Lee Goldenberg introduced new Caltrans Division of Rail staff to the committee.

Item 8 – Adjournment

UPCOMING QUARTERLY MEETINGS

Tentatively: Thursday, *November 4*, 2010 in Madera, pending the completion of the new Madera Amtrak Station.

Other previously determined dates for 2011:

Thursday January 27 (Location TBD)

Thursday April 28 (Location TBD)

Thursday July 28 (Location TBD)

Thursday October 27 (Location TBD)